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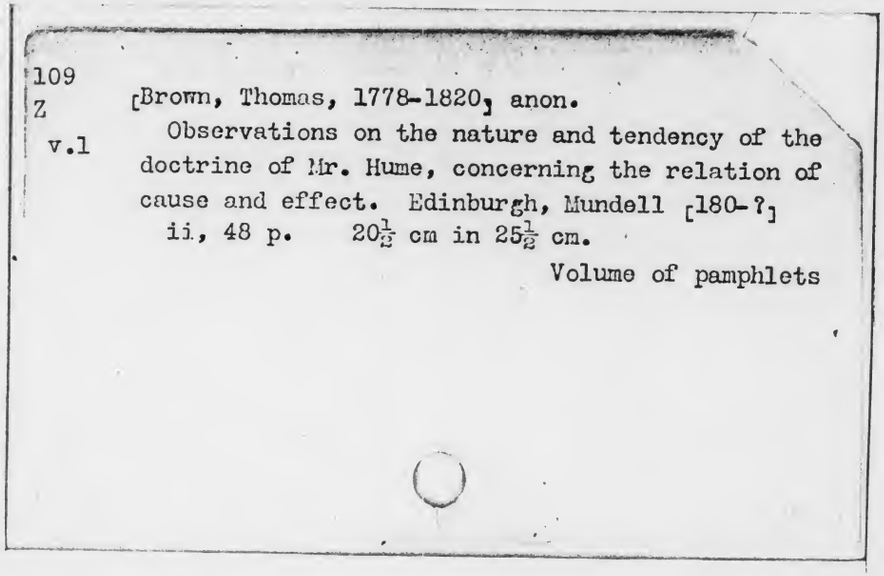

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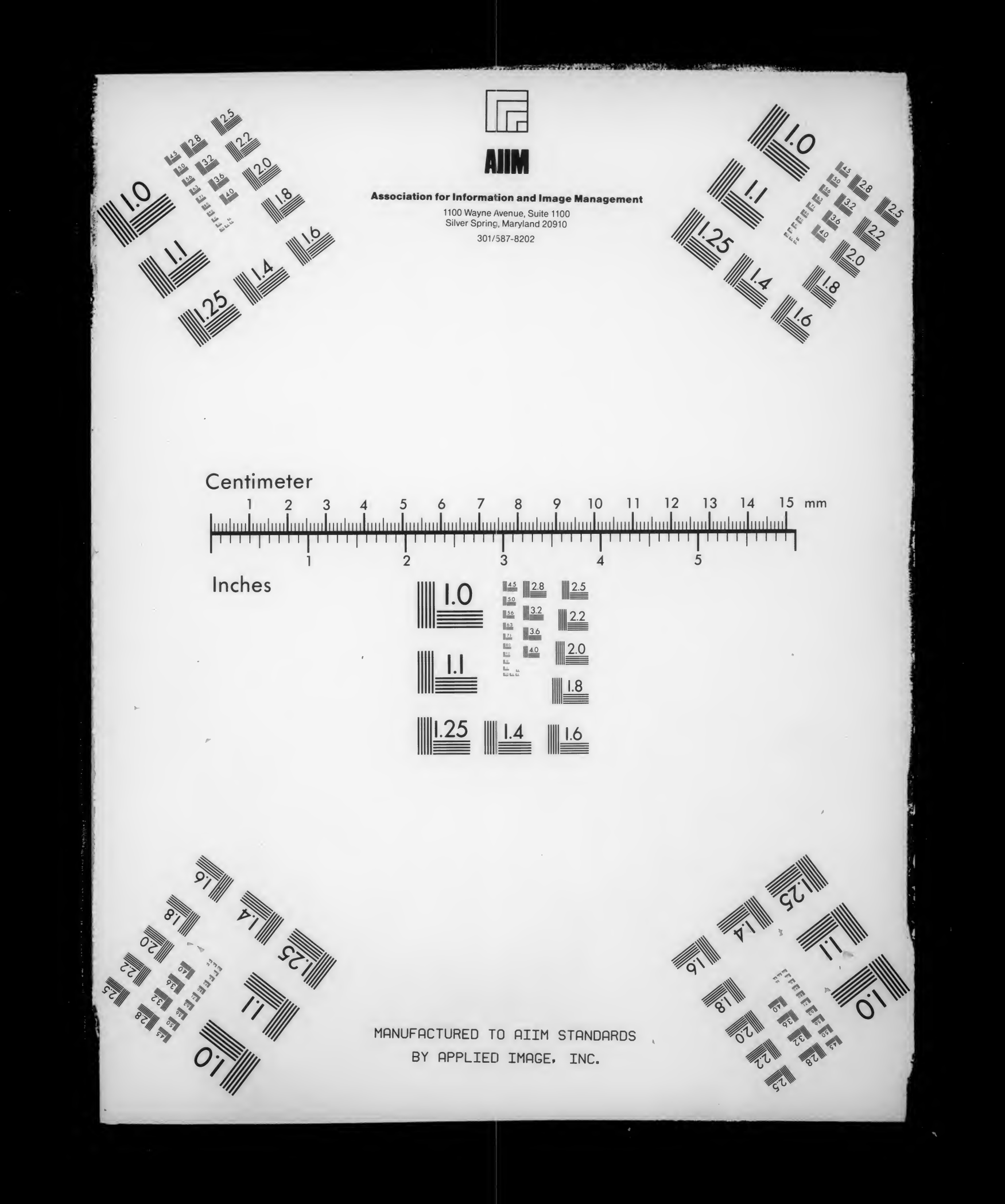
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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

NATURE AND TENDENCY

OF THE

DOCTRINE OF Mr. HUME,

CONCERNING

THE RELATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

By Thomas Brown, M.D. 1778-1820

EDINBURGH: 1805

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PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Observations is too sensible of the respect which is due to the Public, not to feel some reluctance, in giving to it the work of a few days. A metaphysical question seems, at first view, to have so little in it of local or temporary interest, that, when there is no opportunity of discussing it completely, it may be delayed without any loss. But, in the present case, there are circumstances, which claim, even for one of the abstrusest questions of metaphysics, the indulgence usually given to the fleeting matters of the day.

A philosopher, of great and deserved scientific celebrity, recently appointed to the chair of mathematics in the university of Edinburgh, has been opposed, for his adoption of some of Mr. Hume's doctrines, by a body of men, who, from the general literary character, and the sanctity of their profession, may be presumed to be at once well acquainted with the nature of heresy, and charitably sparing in the imputation of it. On a reference from them, this subject, unquestionably of the

greatest importance, is about to come for decision before the highest ecclesiastical court in Scotland. It occurred, therefore, to the Author of the following pages, that it would not be uninteresting, to examine minutely the steps by which Mr. Hume was led to his general conclusion on the Nature of Cause and Effect, that, by appreciating the value of the separate propositions, we might be the better able to discover the truth or the falsehood, as well as the tendency, of the whole connected doctrine. In this investigation, he has endeavoured to avoid every allusion to the personal circumstances which called it forth, and to treat the question exactly in the same manner as he would have done, had no reference on the subject been pending before any tribunal.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

THAT Mr. Hume was an acute *thinker* in metaphysics, there are probably none, even of his most daring antagonists, who will venture to deny. That he was also a perspicuous metaphysical *writer*, has been generally admitted; but it has been admitted, chiefly as a consequence of the former praise, or from the remembrance of that power of style, which, in other respects, he unquestionably possessed. In his shorter details of historical reasoning no defect is perceived, because these afford room for the display of acute conjecture, and of a happy combination of loose circumstances, rather than for regular consecutive demonstration. But, as a metaphysical writer, Mr. Hume is in no degree supereminent in those qualities, which the *developement* of an abstruse and complicated science peculiarly requires. He could seize a first principle, with singular rapidity; but, to us, he rather exhibits it gracefully at different distances, than brings it regularly and directly to the best point of vision. In every separate view which he gives us of a subject, we

are delighted with his acuteness, and charmed with the richness and happiness of the imagery which is occasionally introduced. We are even struck at times with the exact and regular order, in which some parts are gradually developed; but, when we consider him as the expositor of a theory, we almost discover that his mind had not been conversant with mathematical inquiries, and we feel that it is the genius of his style to *illustrate*, rather than to *establish*.

To the essays on causation, these remarks are more applicable, than to any other part of Mr. Hume's writings. The general doctrine, all the parts of which might apparently have been stated with greater effect in a single essay, is obscured and perplexed, by the irregular and dilatory mode in which it is presented to us. The series of propositions is broken incessantly, by a repetition of the same 'sceptical doubts;' and, even when the whole doctrine has been presented to us, the whole doctrine is formally delivered to us again, in another long essay 'on the idea of necessary connexion,' which differs in little more than in title, from those which preceded it. It will, therefore, be expedient, in our examination of the theory, to arrange it into separate propositions, and consider each of these in its regular order.

It may be stated, as the first proposition of Mr. Hume's theory, that *the relation of* * *cause and effect cannot be*

* *Cause* may be defined, *an object followed by another, where, if the first object had not been, the second had not appeared, and which, existing again in similar circumstances, will always be followed by the second.* By a conversion of terms, we obtain a definition of the co-relative *effect.*

discovered a priori. In every case, the second phenomenon must have been previously witnessed: for there is nothing in the first appearance of any object, which can lead us to predict the appearance of a particular object, rather than of any other, as immediately successive. Were this anticipation possible, all men would be equally philosophers, and all would be philosophers at birth. A lucky chance converted the magnet into some thing more than an ugly stone. It is by experience alone we know, that a spark, like that which falls and is extinguished on a heap of sand, will raise a heap of gunpowder into an irresistible conflagration. It is by experience alone we know, that the sight of wretchedness will cause in one bosom no emotion, while it melts another into pity, that almost equals in sorrow the grief which it deplores. Without that experience, we might with equal reason have imagined, that the spark would have been extinguished on the gunpowder, and that pain, unfelt by ourselves, would in us have excited no emotion.

Of the truth of this first proposition, instances may be given, as numerous and various as the phenomena of nature. The preceding are taken from mind, as well as from matter, to shew, as far as actual knowledge is concerned, the exact similarity of both cases. In the latter case, indeed, we may often seem to have, *a priori*, a knowledge of succeeding events, by motions made in apparent adaptation to circumstances that are about to follow. But we have no reason to imagine, that an infant, who is for the first time applied to his mother's

breast, has any idea of the milky stream that is to flow, when he forms his little vacuum for its reception. The necessary motions are the result of an instinct, unerring, because it is not left to the capricious accidents of human knowledge; and provident and perfect, because it is arranged by the highest wisdom. Wherever *knowledge* is concerned, however, it follows the same laws, whether in matter, or in mind. That the desire of moving his arm will be followed by its motion, is not known to the swaddled babe, and is believed by the impotent paralytic. The pleasure which the contemplation of works of intellectual excellence inspires, has never entered into the imagination of the illiterate. The passions of love, ambition, avarice, are *felt* by the lover, the hero, the miser; by others their nature is *learned* from description, in the same manner as we acquire our knowledge of the serpents and tygers of the East. We think, indeed, that the phenomena of mind are less dependent on experience, than those of matter, because the greater number of emotions, and even of passions, are, in some degree, known to us, so early, that we have forgotten the time when the experience was acquired; while the external world presents to us a never-ending series of new objects, and at once, by their permanence, keeps our memory alive, and impresses on it the difficulty of discovery, by the complicated apparatus which it obliges us to use. Yet, uniform as the mental phenomena in most circumstances must be, how different, even as to many of these, would be the predictions of individuals of different ages and countries. No Roman would have scrupled to foretel,

that the combat of gladiators, which was to be exhibited on the morrow, would be witnessed with delight, by the most gentle and delicate of the virgins of Rome. To a Briton, unacquainted with that mixture of barbarism and civilization, such an assertion would seem not less absurd, than if it had predicted a change in the well-known order of material phenomena. What is called knowledge of the world, is knowledge of the human mind; and, when the address, and nice discrimination, of one who has spent a long life in scenes of business, are contrasted with the artlessness of a child, or even with the simplicity of a retired philosopher, it is impossible for us not to feel, that, like all other knowledge, that of our intellectual and moral frame is dependent on experience.

So different, however, has the nature of succession been considered, in the phenomena of mind and of matter, that on this difference has been founded a theory of power, which has met with very general acceptance. It has been asserted, that from mind alone we derive our idea of power; and that the idea, acquired by the consciousness of our own exertion, is *transferred* to the apparent changes of external matter. But, *unless we suppose the idea of power to have been otherwise acquired*, what we call *exertion* is nothing more than the sequence of motion to desire, as magnetism is the sequence of iron to the approach of a loadstone. We have, in each case, *two* phenomena, but we have no more; and we as little ascribe *desire* to the loadstone, as we suppose the approach of a loadstone to have preceded our muscular motion. If we say that we ascribe, not *desire*, but *power*, to the loadstone, we beg the question: for power, which has a

relation to future cases, as well as to the present, is something more than the mere sequence of desire and motion, which is all that took place in exertion; and, if from one sequence any inference may be made, as to the *recurrence* of sequences, it may be made as much from the motion of iron, as from the motion of a limb. If what we feel be transferred, it is evidently *desire* which we feel. Till the muscular motion has taken place, it is desire alone; it is afterwards desire, combined with the knowledge that a muscular motion has been its consequence; but neither is this combination of knowledge and desire *transferred* to the loadstone, nor, after magnetism has been observed, is there less knowledge of *it* too, as a past event. In both cases, indeed, as will afterwards appear, the inference, as to future similarity of event, is made from one general principle; but it is a principle common to all sequences, and which, we have every reason to believe, would operate in the same manner, though man were wholly incapable of muscular exertion.

It is, perhaps, even too much authority which Mr. Hume gives to this error, when he allows, that the *animal nisus* which we experience enters very much into the vulgar idea of power. It is more probable, that the feeling of this animal nisus, though derived from cases in which the exertion has eventually succeeded, enters largely into the vulgar idea of restraint, or want of power. But, that the great and general error should have been adopted by philosophers, is peculiarly unaccountable, as it is impossible to attend to the common language of the science of mind, without perceiving its innumerable de-

rivations from the analogies of matter. The phenomena of mind succeed each other in a certain order; the phenomena of matter also have their peculiar order: but, were we to judge by the language of each, from which of the two sequences our idea of power is derived, the probability would seem on the side of the latter. It is only in poetry that wishes and volitions are given to inanimate objects, while, even in common conversation, we never speak of the desires and passions of the soul without a series of metaphors, taken from the objects around us. And, indeed, when we consider, not the language only, but the very thoughts and abstractions, of which theories are made, we discover innumerable attempts to materialize every operation of the mind, but very few attempts to spiritualize the operations of matter. How much have we heard of images, and impulses, and traces in the sensorium, of vibrations, and vibratiuncles, of animal spirits, electricity, and galvanism? It is said, indeed, that man has a tendency to animate and personify every object around him. Planets have had their regent spirits; and Oreads, Dryads, and Naiads, have formed a part of popular mythology. But it is easy to trace the source of the supposed agency, where the personification has not arisen from the embellishments of poetry; for the nymphs, like the fays of our own mythology, are usually represented, rather as inhabitants of certain districts than as connecting and carrying on the regular and uniform natural processes over which they preside. It is only where no visible cause is discerned that the immediate agency of spirits is supposed. It is a *dignus vindice*

hodus, and a god is therefore introduced, because mind, which is the only power that is itself altogether invisible, furnishes the only analogy to which recourse can be had. When sounds, therefore, are heard from the mountain, the grove, or the stream, while around the hearer no blast is stirring; when a voice of many thunders cries aloud, and fire flashes from clouds, which, the very moment before, were one gloomy stilness, it is not wonderful that the heart and knee of man should fall prostrate, as in the presence of a mighty spirit. But this belief is only the result of an analogical reasoning, which, in a certain stage of physical science, is irresistible, and differs not, in the slightest degree, from a thousand other reasonings of analogy in physics, in which the cause supposed is not spiritual but material. It is confined to certain cases in which *the analogy of life* is more striking than any other, and is very different from that general theory, which ascribes a supposed living power to the production of every change. The Roman, who heard Jupiter in the sky, and acknowledged that he reigned, saw and recognised an endless succession of material causes in the more common spontaneous changes of nature, and in the daily arts of life; and while in the public field of exercise he drove the ball, or watched it as it fell and rebounded from the earth, he never once imagined that a god was at all concerned in the operation.

The idea of power, we may therefore conclude, is not derived from the phenomena of mind, more than from those of matter, both which furnish trains of sequences, that differ only as their own respective sequences differ

among themselves. The very feeling of power, or of connection, would be itself only a new part of a sequence. In neither case can the antecedent alone, without experience, inform us of that which is to follow; and therefore the first proposition of Mr. Hume's theory must be admitted, that *the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered a priori*.

The second proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that, *even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered by reason*. Experience can inform us only of the past. But the relation of cause and effect has reference to *future and invariable* antecedence and sequence, of which no experience can inform us. We believe it, indeed, irresistibly; and the belief is not denied: it is only the attempt to found the belief on reason which this proposition opposes. He who asserts, that A *will always be* followed by B, asserts *more* than he who asserts, that A *has always been* followed by B; and it is this addition which forms the very essence of the relation of cause and effect. Neither of the propositions includes the other; and, as they have no agreement, *reason*, which is the *sense of agreement*, cannot be applied to them. To use the language of logic, there is no major proposition expressed or understood, for there is no middle term; and the syllogism is accordingly imperfect. Till it be shewn, therefore, that the future is involved in the past, we must allow the truth of the second proposition, that, even after experience, the relation of cause and effect cannot be discovered *by reason*.

The third proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that, *the relation of cause and effect is an object of belief alone*.

The belief, he acknowledges, is irresistible, but is derived from a principle of our own nature only, and not from the qualities of external things. To this third proposition it is impossible to deny our assent, if we have given it to the preceding two: for, of any quality, which is incapable of being *perceived* or *inferred*, our belief, however fixed and certain, can result only from that instinctive principle of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. Of this belief alone, therefore, is the relation of cause and effect an object.

It must be admitted, however, in opposition to Mr. Hume, whose general theory of ideas made him unwilling to acknowledge one which was not the copy of some previous impression, that, as soon as we *believe* the relation of cause and effect, the idea of power arises. The belief, indeed, is instinctive; but the ideas, which flow from that belief, will be the same, whether it be founded on immediate perception, or on the slower results of reason, or on the instinctive feelings of our mind. If we consider a loadstone, not merely as that, the appearance of which preceded the motion of a piece of iron in its vicinity, but, as that, the appearance of which will, in all future time, be followed by the motion of a piece of iron in its vicinity, we have as clear a conception of this quality of the loadstone,—its *attraction*, in the strict Newtonian sense of that term,—as we have of its dusky hue: for, without such a conception, our *belief* of the future unexisting fact would be impossible. It may be said, indeed, that the idea of attraction is only an affection of our mind; but the idea of colour is nothing more, and,

if we be justifiable in ascribing the one to an external object, we are justifiable also in ascribing the other. Of this quality of the loadstone *magnetism* is the particular name, from which *power* * differs only as it is a general

* *Uniform* antecedence, which has reference to the past only, does not imply the idea of power; but uniform *and invariable* antecedence, which has reference, not merely to the past, but to *every future case*, is the most exact definition which can be given of power. That power is creation no one supposes. Though innumerable successions of causes and effects have taken place, the particles which constitute the present world are, we have every reason to believe, exactly the same particles which constituted the world at the time of its creation. But certain particles have often changed their place, and have always followed the change of place of certain other particles. This is merely uniform, or *unvaried*, sequence. But he who, in addition to this, believes in *invariable*, as well as uniform, sequence, believes, by the very force of the term which he uses, that the past antecedent will always be followed by the past consequent, or, in other words, that the former change *never can take place without being followed by the second*. Events which are invariable cannot be considered as loose and separate; for these are the very qualities to which invariableness is opposed. They are *causes* and *effects*, in the strictest sense of these terms; for the belief of causation is only the instinctive belief of the invariableness of antecedence. In what this power, or invariableness of antecedence, consists, it is absurd to inquire, as it is absurd to inquire in what the mutual attractions of the particles of matter consist. We believe, as in the latter case, that a body *is* heavy; we believe, as in the former case, that the body *will always be* heavy: and with the nature of the attraction, or with the nature of the *perpetual similarity* of the attraction, no experiment nor reasoning can ever make us more intimately acquainted. It is even too much to say, that there is, in the particles of matter, an operative principle; for the invariableness of sequence *may* depend only on the harmonious arrangement of their motions by that almighty power, which created them; and we certainly are not entitled to affirm, as must be the case if effects flowed necessarily from an operating prin-

name, including, with magnetism, all cases of future invariable antecedence, whatever the antecedents and consequents may be. We know not what it is which gives this particular antecedence to the loadstone more than to flint; but as little do we know what it is which renders the dusky loadstone, more than snow, an absorber of certain incident rays of light. The idea of power, it may even be said, is implied in every other idea, or, at least, is implied in the words which we use to express them. When we speak of the *whiteness* of snow, the *heaviness* of iron, the *ductility* of gold, we allude to these, not as past sensations only, but as future qualities. We take

ciple in causes, that Deity is useless, and that exactly the same order of events would take place as at present, though he either did not exist, or lived apart from the world, and careless of it, like the god of Epicurus. An *operating* principle in *causes* is at best an inelegant tautology: it is like a *sweet-making* quality in *sweetness*, and a quality in *redness* which makes it *red: redness*, *sweetness*, *invariableness of antecedence*, are all which can be understood.

This definition of power is beautifully implied in that passage of Genesis, so often quoted, and so often read with admiration, which describes the creation of light. 'And God said, let there be light; and there was light.' It is from stating nothing more than the antecedent and consequent, that the sublime simplicity of the description is derived. God speaks, and it is done. We imagine nothing intermediate. In our highest contemplation of his power, we believe only that, when he willed creation, a world arose, and that, in all future time, his will to create cannot exist without being followed by the rise of worlds; that his will to destroy will be, in like manner, followed by destruction; and his will to vary the course of things by miraculous appearances. The will is the only necessary previous change; and that Being has almighty power, whose every will is immediately and *invariably followed* by the existence of its object.

for granted that similarity * of the future to the past which, referred to a particular object, is power; and we mean to assert, that snow will, to-morrow and for ever, be white, iron heavy, gold ductile.

The three propositions, already considered, form a whole, independently of those which follow. They comprehend all that part of the theory on which Mr. Hume has unfortunately drawn unjust suspicion, by giving it a name which the vanity and folly and guilt of genius have taught us to hold in dread. He has termed it *sceptical doubts*; but it is a mild and moderate scepticism, which suffers us to take shelter in a first principle of intuitive belief, and is, in truth, the only part of the theory which at all deserves our approbation. In every reasoning, however small its number of propositions, there must always be one proposition assumed without

* An attempt has been made to found an argument on the etymology of many of the words of causation in common use, as signifying originally only antecedence and consequence. But it should be remembered, that *the thing before*, when nothing is added to modify its meaning, may signify as much the thing *which will always be* before as the thing *which has always been* before, and that, in the former sense, it is strictly significant of causation. Even though this objection were omitted, and though *every* word, significant of power, were shewn to mean only antecedence, the argument would be of very little weight; for, whatever be our theory of the relation of antecedents and consequents, as closely or loosely conjoined, a cause must still be *a thing before*; and it is such a circumstance of obvious distinction alone, or some other equally obvious, which we must suppose the rude framers of language to have adopted in their classification of events. To how coarse and heavy an original have many of our most refined and *winged* words been traced by the acuteness of modern philology!

proof; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that, in our reasonings concerning matters of fact, Mr. Hume should have been able to point out such a proposition. He has shewn us, that we *believe*, rather than *discover*, the relation of cause and effect. But, had it been true that the relation of cause and effect is immediately perceptible in objects, or is fairly discoverable by reason, it would still have been in the power of scepticism to shew some other principle which, in our reasonings concerning matters of fact, we believe, rather than discover. Mr. Hume has indeed shewn, that every reasoning, which implies the belief of causation, is, in some degree, hypothetical, and depends on the truth of that faith by which we suppose the relation of cause and effect; but the reasoning must have been, at any rate, hypothetical, and have depended on the truth of some assumed principle, not more generally admitted. This remark will be afterwards of more importance, when we consider the dangerous consequences, which have been supposed to flow from Mr. Hume's theory. It is a remark, of which, apparently, he was not aware himself. He seems to consider the possible fallacy of our reasoning on matters of fact to depend wholly on the assumption of the future similarity of antecedents and consequents, and, as if struck with wonder, that a proposition should be believed intuitively, attempts to give a 'sceptical solution' of the mystery, which is, in truth, no solution, but only an unwarranted limitation and modification of it, and which, though it were perfectly just, would still leave some intuitive belief, as mysterious, to be wondered at, but not to be solved, by future inquirers.

The fourth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is, that *the relation of cause and effect is believed to exist between objects, only after their customary conjunction is known to us.* The belief, he maintains, does not arise in our mind after a single instance of sequence, but after repeated observation of the same sequence: it is not on a single result that the experimentalist relies, when he imagines that he has discovered a cause. But is it not obvious, that Mr. Hume derives his argument from a state of the mind very different from that in which the first trains of events were observed by us. Among so many unconnected, but *co-existing*, phenomena, as are perpetually taking place around us, it is impossible that, in the multitude of trains of sequences, the parts of one train alone should be always observed by us; and the mind, therefore, even though originally led to believe *causation*, or invariable similarity in every sequence, must soon be rendered doubtful of its first belief, when, from the confusion of parts of trains, the expected sequence is found to be different. If, as Mr. Hume confesses, no experience of the past, however long and certain, entitle us to infer a future similarity of result, in the unknown time before us, with any greater evidence to our reason than may be drawn from the first single instance of sequence, the probability is, that the original belief is not dependent on experience. At whatever stage of observation our belief begin, whether at the first or the thousandth succession of the same events, the belief itself must still be intuitive; for the propositions, *B has once succeeded A*, and *B will for ever succeed A*, are not more different than the propositions, *B has a thousand times succeeded A*,

and *B will for ever succeed A*. The belief, also, at whatever stage it begin, is capable of being counteracted in particular cases; for we often cease to believe in causes, the reality of which we have for years maintained. The only question then seems to be, whether the belief, equally intuitive on both suppositions, arise at one stage of observation or at another; and as, on both suppositions, the mature mind, often expecting and often deceived, but deceived always less frequently as the same succession has been more frequently observed, would learn to feel the value of experience, and to withhold its complete assent, till that important confirmation should be given, it is evident, that on the feelings of advanced years, little reliance can be placed in the question. We have thus only, at best, a comparison of probabilities; but the probabilities are surely much stronger on that side, which asserts the feeling of sequence to be *originally* followed with the belief of power or invariable future similarity. Does the number of believed causes increase with our years? Do we not rather remember a time when, *if without contrary experience*, we had a tendency to combine, as necessarily consecutive, the most loose and unconnected events? The effect of age seems to have been, not to increase, but to diminish, the number of our convictions, by shewing us, that many events, which we considered as necessarily antecedent of others, have not been followed by them. When we mix two substances, before uncombined, and a peculiar product appears, what is the state of our mind? Do we consider the mixture and the product as two loose phenomena, unconnected, as completely as the appearance of the

new chemical substance in our vessel, and the appearance of a friend, who accidentally enters our apartment at the moment? It is this state of mind alone which can be reconciled with Mr. Hume's supposition; but it is surely not the state of mind of the chemist. He believes the product to be the *effect* of the mixture, or, if he have not absolute assurance, the want of conviction *arises only from the doubts which are suggested by his past experience*. The accident of temperature, the purity of the substances used, the presence of air, or of other foreign matters, in the vessel, and the peculiar affinities of the vessel itself, occur to him *as causes* which may have modified the result. To these he turns his attention. By some possible variation of these, he believes, that the event may possibly be different; but, were he certain, that all these circumstances would for ever be the same, he would have no doubt, that the resulting product also would for ever be the same. The exact similarity of all circumstances being supposed, his conviction, after one experiment, would be, in every respect, as great as after a thousand repetitions. It is not necessary to be a practised experimentalist to have felt this confutation of Mr. Hume's theory. In the common circumstances of life, how often have we felt a struggle between our tendency to conjoin events, and the past experience, which shews us that they have no necessary connection! It is a struggle like that which we feel with another very strong principle of belief, when we look through an optical instrument on a landscape that is familiar to us. The church, and the lake, and its hanging wood, appear to us indeed to be near; but we have a stronger conviction,

from past experience, that they are far off; and we do not hasten, as if he were before us, to meet the friend whom we see approaching at the very end of our telescope. Did *one train of phenomena alone* take place in nature, it is probable that our conviction would be in every case undoubting; but we learn, from varied disappointment, that innumerable trains are taking place together; and we feel a want of certainty, *but it is in this only*, that we are ignorant, to which of the trains the particular phenomenon belongs. The very knowledge that there are separate trains of phenomena, is itself one of the strongest proofs that the belief of causation is immediate. It is seldom that one simple sensation exists; or, rather, no sensation is entirely simple. Various objects at the same moment affect us, and form an aggregate, which is, probably, at no other period exactly the same. If, therefore, the return of antecedents and consequents, exactly similar, were necessary, before any belief could arise, it never would arise; as, if there was no presumption that A, which once before succeeded X, would succeed it again, more than B, or C, which we had never before observed to succeed X, it would be impossible, when X, Y, Z, were, at one moment, producing A, B, C, to determine of which part of the aggregate the renewed A was the consequence. The analysis and distribution depend only on the belief, or presumption, which followed the observation of the first sequence. Without this, the mixed sequence would be as loose as before; and hence, the very supposition, that custom has any effect in determining our belief, is an avowal, that a previous anticipation existed. Even with

all the doubts which the experience of many years has given us, we never hesitate, in simpler cases, in which we less suspect concurring trains, to believe, where, according to Mr. Hume, belief is impossible. The organ of taste, for instance, is of easy limitation, with little chance of the admixture of foreign bodies. When a new fruit is presented to us, and we apply it to that organ, though altogether deprived of the aid of customary connection, and therefore, according to Mr. Hume, incapable of forming any opinion, but that of casual sequence, we have no scruple in ascribing the new sensation to the new object, and we say, that it is sweet, or acid, or bitter. We pluck a flower, which we have never before seen; we are sensible of a disagreeable odour; and we throw away the flower, as if from it the odour arose. The epicure, who tastes a new ragout, knows well, that the source of his pleasure is in the dish before him, and, if he wish to enjoy it again, it is to that dish alone he returns, though twenty new objects be around it. The boy, who for the first time catches a bee, and is astonished to feel its sting, does not wait for a second and third application of the poison, before he learn to fear it in futnre. Whether his belief be consistent with reason, is not the inquiry. It has been already admitted, that the similarity of future events is not a conclusion of reason, derived from the perceived agreement of propositions, but is a single unconnected proposition, believed, not judged, that rises in the mind, inevitably, and with irresistible conviction. Whether true or false, the belief is in these cases felt, and it is felt without even the possibility of perceived conjunction. Would

Mr. Hume himself have considered the sequences as purely accidental? He owns, that, ‘ when a child has ‘ felt the sensation of pain from touching the flame of a ‘ candle, he will be careful not to put his hand near any ‘ candle:’ yet the child, even though old enough to have acquired an accurate knowledge of the places of objects, and thus to be certain that it is the candle which is burning him, should, in such circumstances, think no more of removing his finger from the flame, than of shaking off the bandage of his foot. As the question is not concerning the justness of belief, but concerning the period of its rise, there is one case which may be considered as almost decisive of it. We often see a phenomenon, for the first time, without having attended to the particular circumstances which preceded it. If it be the experience of custom alone, which can give us that belief of connection, by which we denominate a change an *effect*, we are, in this case, not merely without a customary sequence; we have not even a single case of it. Yet there is no one, who does not believe the change to be *an* effect, as completely as if he had witnessed every preceding circumstance. On this one point he is in no suspense, and waits, only to discover *what* object, in the uniform and regular order of succession, was its co-relative cause. Are we then to assert, that all phenomena, before repeated experience of their particular conjunctions, appear to us equally loose and unconnected, and that, in no instance, can the supposition of a peculiar connection arise, till the observed conjunction has been customary? Do not all the circumstances of our belief rather support the contrary opinion, that a peculiar connection may be supposed, even after a single sequence;

that, as innumerable trains of phenomena are taking place together, and mingling in our observation, the *primary* effect of experience has been, not to increase, but to weaken, our belief of the connection of events, by presenting to us, as a regular train of consequents, irregular portions of different co-existing trains; that, our expectation of uniformity being thus often disappointed, a habit of doubt has arisen, and the *secondary* influence of experience begins to operate, which, by shewing us the customary successions of events, though it give us not our first notion of the connection of trains of phenomena, informs us, with greater certainty, to which, of many co-existing trains, a particular phenomenon belongs; that hence the belief of connection, which, according to Mr. Hume, should, in every case, depend on the number of observations, and on nothing more, is more or less early, according to the nature of the particular phenomena observed, as these furnish greater or less room for imagining a number of concurring trains, being immediate, or almost immediate, where the new sequence is simple, and of longer suspense, where the sequence is complex.

If the preceding reasoning be just, the error of Mr. Hume evidently consists, not in affirming too much, but in affirming too little: for, if any succession of events can suggest the expectation of future similarity, there is surely nothing in the frequent recurrence of thesuccession, which can diminish the expectation. It may not be greater, after it has been often confirmed, but it certainly cannot be less; and the theory is therefore objec-

able, only as confining, to sequences that have been often observed, a belief which, originally at least, is common to them with other sequences. Yet, by a singular mistake, Mr. Hume has been censured by his opponents, as if his affirmation had been too large. Thus, it has been maintained, that there are cases of uniform succession, in which the belief of causation is never felt, since, from the very commencement of our existence, day has succeeded night in endless return, without any supposition arising, that night is the cause of day. But it should be remembered, that day and night are not words which denote two particular phenomena, but are words invented by us to express long series of phenomena. What various appearances of nature, from the freshness of the first morning beam, to the last languor of the evening sky, changing with the progress of the seasons, and dependent on the accidents of temperature, and vapour, and wind, are included in every day. These are not one, because the word which expresses them is one; and it is the believed relation of single events, not the arbitrary combinations of language, which Mr. Hume professes to explain. If, therefore, there be any force in the objection, it must be shewn that, notwithstanding the customary conjunction, we do not believe the relation of cause and effect to exist, between the successive *pairs* of that multitude of events, which we denominate night and day. What then are the great events included in those terms? If we consider them philosophically, they are the series of positions in relation to the sun, at which the earth arrives in the course of its diurnal revolution; and, in this view, there is surely

no one, who doubts, that the motion of the earth, immediately before sun-rise, is the cause of the position, which renders that glorious luminary visible to us. If we consider the phenomena of night and day in a more vulgar sense, they include various degrees of darkness and light, with some of the chief changes of appearance in the heavenly bodies. Even in this sense, there is no one who doubts, that the rising of the sun is the cause of the light which follows it, and that its setting is the cause of the subsequent darkness. That darkness and light mutually produce each other, they do not believe; and, if they did believe it, their belief, instead of confirming the truth of Mr. Hume's theory, would prove it to be false, as it would prove the relation of cause and effect to be supposed, where there was no customary connection. How often, during a long and sleepless night, does the sensation of darkness exist, without being followed by the sensation of light! We perceive the gloom;—we feel our own position in bed, or some bodily or mental pain which prevents repose;—innumerable thoughts arise, at intervals, in our mind, and with these the perception of gloom is occasionally mingled, without being followed by the perception of light. At last light is perceived, and, as mingled with all our occupations and pleasures, is perceived innumerable times during the day, without having for its immediate consequence the sensation of darkness. Can we then be said to have an uniform experience of the conjunction of the two sensations? Do they not rather appear to follow each other loosely? In the vulgar, therefore, as well as the philo-

sophic sense of the terms, the recurrence of day and night furnishes no objection to Mr. Hume's theory.

The general conclusion, therefore, on the fourth proposition, is, that the experience of customary succession is not necessary to the belief of future similarity of sequence; but that, where, from a supposed concurrence of separate trains of phenomena, any doubt is felt, the influence of the experience of customary succession is always to diminish the doubt.

The fifth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory is of less consequence, as it proceeds on the belief of the fourth, of the falsehood of which, however, it will be additional evidence, if this also be found to be false, since it states the mode in which, he maintains, that experience, if it be the cause of belief, must be supposed to have influence. He does not maintain, that, after all, the belief is not instinctive, but only that certain circumstances are necessary, before the instinctive feeling arises. *When two objects have been frequently observed in succession, the mind passes readily from the idea of one to the idea of the other; from this transition, and from the greater vividness of the idea thus more readily suggested, there arises a belief of the relation of cause and effect between them.* Such is the sum of Mr. Hume's professed solution, as given by him in his fifth and seventh sections, a solution which, when examined narrowly, appears too absurd to have satisfied even its author, and which strikes us with double astonishment, when we consider that its author was Mr. Hume. That it has been even for a moment received by others, can be accounted for only from the shelter which the errors of thought have received from

the confusion of the statement: for, though undoubtedly his is not a name of which any philosopher can speak lightly, and though I feel all the reverence which is due to his general acuteness, and to the wonderful talents which, in many respects, he possessed, I must confess, that the essays in which, after having given his sceptical doubts, he proceeds to explain the origin of our belief of causation, are to be ranked with our worst specimens of metaphysical disquisition. All is repetition, and hypothesis, which is at variance with almost every fact; and, if at any time we imagine, that we have discovered the acuteness, which before delighted us in the sceptical part of the theory, it is only in the repetitions of those very doubts, which are occasionally sprinkled over the less ingenious attempt to solve them.

Before the fifth proposition can be sufficiently understood, it will be necessary to examine another more general doctrine, which Mr. Hume has mingled with it. 'The difference between fiction and belief,' he says, 'lies in some sentiment or feeling, which is annexed to the latter, not to the former;' and he then, with some labour of reasoning, demonstrates, that the sentiment thus annexed to belief, and constituting belief, is—*belief.* Belief itself distinguishes belief from fiction; or, in other words, fiction is not belief. This is certainly just; but would it not have been better, at once to own, that the feelings of reality and fiction are different, than, even for a moment, to consider the difference as susceptible of proof, since the proof must be only a repetition of the difference? Belief he afterwards defines, to be 'nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady, concep-

tion of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain*.' That imagination is sometimes able to attain whatever qualities are essential to belief, the phenomena of reverie and of dreaming sufficiently shew. But, omitting this smaller error of definition, can we acquiesce in a statement of the essentials of belief, which has reference only to a single class of realities? Mr. Hume's doctrine is perfectly just, when it is extended only to the present moment, to the objects which we believe to be actually present to our senses; for, when sensations and ideas of imagination occur together, we ascribe external and independent reality, only to the more vivid of the two, and in every case, except impas-

* He adds: 'This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, 'is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities, 'or what is taken for such, more present to us than fictions, causes them to 'weigh more in the thought, and gives them a superior influence on the 'passions and imagination. Provided we agree about the thing, it is need-'less to dispute about the terms. The imagination has the command 'over all its ideas, and can join and mix and vary them, in all the ways 'possible. It may conceive fictitious objects, with all the circumstances 'of place and time. It may set them in a manner before our eyes, in 'their true colours, just as they might have existed. But as it is impos-'sible, that this faculty of imagination can ever, of itself, reach belief, 'it is evident, that belief consists not in the peculiar nature or order of 'ideas, but in the manner of their conception, and in their feeling 'to the mind.' This is partly an example of reasoning in a circle, as, in order to shew what it is, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, it assumes it to be impossible, that the imagination can ever, of itself, reach belief, and is partly a contradiction to itself, as it supposes, that imagination can set objects before us *in their true colours, just as they might have existed*, and yet supposes fictions to differ from realities, in being *less vivid*.

sioned reverie, sensations are the more vivid. But belief of reality is not confined to the objects that are actually present; and, in such cases, belief is the effect of former conviction, or of testimony, not of any peculiar quality of the present ideas. That it implies a peculiar 'manner of conception,' and 'feeling to the mind,' must be admitted: for belief is certainly not the same feeling as disbelief. But Mr. Hume, though he occasionally contrive to darken his subject by the use of such words that signify nothing, must, if his theory have any consistency, confine it to the peculiar steadiness and liveliness of certain conceptions, compared with others. The sole question, therefore, is, whether, in every case of belief, our conceptions of objects, as real, be more 'vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady,' than when we conceive them as feigned. When we believe, after having almost forgotten his exploits, without being informed of a single feature of his face, or knowing even whether he was tall or short; that Arminius, the assertor of the liberty of Germany, existed; and, when we acknowledge as wholly feigned, the existence of the heroine of a fashionable novel, of whose exact stature, and proportions, and graces, and dimples, and whiteness of teeth, and languishing blueness of eyes, a brilliant portraiture is given us, and whose mournful adventures we are able to detail, in the very succession in which their author represented them;—when the conviction is so different, is it from our knowledge of the different species of writing, that our judgment is formed; or do we believe, and disbelieve, because our conception of the modern heroine is

less lively than that of the ancient hero? Have we a less firm conception of Othello, than of the humble soldiers who fought in the battle of Agincourt; and, when the conqueror of that great day is represented on our theatres, is the mimic king, or his real prototype, more steadily before us? How many are there, who, during a long life spent in a foreign country, have lost, in their pictures of remembrance, almost every trace of the friends of their youth! Yet the faint conceptions that arise are dear to them still, not as fictions, but as realities; and it is not from any fading of memory that they tremble, when they fear, that the friends for whom they are anxious exist no more. The very wildness and wonderfulness of romance, as it excites peculiar emotion, is a cause not of less, but of more, lively conception; and, when we are interested in our knight, the tower and the giant rise before us in stronger colours, than the host and his inn on a modern highway. 'In our conception,' says Mr. Hume, 'we can join the head of a man to the body of a horse; but it is not in our power to believe that such an animal has ever really existed.' That we have not the power, is true; but it is not equally true, that our conception is less lively. We picture Bottom, the weaver, as readily, after his transmutation of head, as before it, though we may not be enamoured of him, after his metamorphosis, like the fairy Queen. There are few, indeed, who have not a more accurate idea of the body of a horse with the head of a man, than of a hippopotamus, or an ouran-outang; and easy would it be to acquire a perfect knowledge of botany, if of every exotic, whose name

and existence we have learned, we had already a more distinct conception, than of a tree, exactly similar in the shape of its parts, to the oak or the elm before our door, but with a trunk of gold, and branches and leaves of silver. By various nations, various objects are believed to exist;—in the multitude of beings, there is one alone, whose existence is an object of universal belief;—it is that great, but incomprehensible Being, on whom alone we tremble to fix our imagination.

Belief, then, arising often from testimony, in events which we have never had an opportunity of witnessing, or from the faint memory of former conviction, or from the calm results of abstract reasoning, is something different from a * vivid and firm conception of an object.

The general doctrine of belief is introduced by Mr.

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* From his theory of belief, Mr. Hume deduces a theory of probability, which he holds to depend, not on the abstract knowledge of the greater number of chances, but on the separate effect of each chance, in brightening conception. He supposes, that, where the number of chances is greater on one side, the mind is carried more frequently to one idea, than to its opposite. 'The concurrence of these several views or glimpses imprints the idea more strongly on the imagination; gives it superior force and vigour; renders its influence on the passions and affections more sensible; and, in a word, begets that reliance or security, which constitutes the nature of belief and opinion.' What theorem would not suffer from such a corollary! When, abstractly, we prefer five chances to one, what is the idea to which the mind is five times carried? If it be unity, our choice should be reversed. When we consider a thousand chances as having greater probability of success than nine hundred and ninety-nine, is the mind carried *one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine* times to the different ideas? The comparison and the preference are the work of a moment.

Hume, to illustrate the particular instance of causation. After two objects have been observed by us often to succeed each other, he supposes, that there is an easy transition of the mind, from one to the other; and that, in all such cases of easy transition to an object, 'the mind reaches a steadier and stronger conception of it, than what otherwise it would have been able to attain.' If the preceding theory of belief were true, it is obvious, that, admitting the fact as stated, we should indeed believe the second object to have real existence, but we should believe no more; as the only effect of the transition is to give us that stronger and steadier conception, on which belief of reality is supposed to depend. But the fact, as stated by Mr. Hume, has no meaning: for how, by transition, can the mind attain a *steadier and stronger* conception of an obje . *than it otherwise would have been able to attain*, when the* *idea* of an object, to use his own sense of that term, can be attained, *in no other way*, than by such a transition as that described; and *impressions* are allowed to be stronger than ideas, however vivid! There is, therefore, no possible ground of comparison. If it be not absurd to talk of † laws of

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association, ideas do not rise by chance: every idea, therefore, if it rise at all, must rise according to those very principles of association, which all, it is contended, have the power of rendering our ideas more vivid than they would have been; or, in other words, more vivid than nonentities. But, even though we were to admit the existence of unsuggested ideas, with which suggested ideas might be compared, as of more strong and steady conception, Mr. Hume's proposition would be scarcely less nugatory, and would be equally inconsistent with the other parts of his doctrine. Instead of an order of associations of causes and effects, all associations would be accompanied with the belief of causation; because all would 'carry the mind' to the conception of the co-relative, and therefore fix it in the conception, with greater steadiness and strength. The sight of a person who resembles our friend, the sight of the place at which we parted from our friend, the sight of the book which our friend wrote, or of the landscape which he painted, all agree in this respect, that they suggest to us immediately the idea of our friend. If, therefore, the suggestion, and consequent vividness of the suggested idea, be all, by which an uniform sequence produces in

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us the belief of causation, we should believe the relation of cause and effect to exist, between our friend, and the person, and the place, as much as between our friend, and the book, and the landscape. To suppose that any circumstance, which is not common to all these cases, is necessary to the belief, is to admit, that Mr. Hume's explanation is false; and to suppose that nothing more is necessary, is to suppose, that all the thoughts of our mind, in our endless day-dreams of memory and imagination, appear to us a series of effects, or of causes. Whether they be effects or causes, is, indeed, on Mr. Hume's principles, impossible to be determined. The son suggests the father, and the father the son; the artist suggests the picture, and the picture the artist. If, previously to the liveliness of the ideas of suggestion, the two objects do not appear to us to be related, the father and the artist may seem as much to have the relation of effects, as of causes, to the son and the picture, the liveliness of suggestion being in both cases the same. In like manner, if liveliness of conception alone be necessary, our external *impressions* differing from our ideas in nothing but greater liveliness, should seem, whenever they disturb the course of our associated ideas, to have the relation of *effect* to that object, the idea of which immediately preceded the impression.

Mr. Hume, indeed, very inconsistently, finds in the succession of ideas, something more than ideas which succeed. In considering them, he loses all his unwillingness to discover *connexion*. The transition itself, from one idea to another, he supposes to be felt as a *third* thing; and from this felt relation, our idea of *power* to

be derived. 'This connexion, therefore, which we *feel* in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion.' 'When many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event, we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connexion. We then *feel* a new sentiment or impression, to-wit, a customary connexion in the thought or imagination between one object and its usual attendant; and this sentiment is the original of that idea which we seek for.' But it is evident, that, though A suggest B a thousand times, a customary *connexion* is no more *felt* between these two ideas, than between any two events. They are still, to use Mr. Hume's language, only *conjoined*. We know only, that B has followed A a thousand times, and neither A nor B is the idea of power. B may be suggested by A; but we are conscious only of A, and afterwards of B, not of *the suggestion*, nor of any thing intermediate. Were we conscious of suggestion, or connexion, the full conception of power would be involved in the first association of the human mind, and all the scepticism of Mr. Hume would be nugatory. If then, *connexion* be felt, and the existence of an external world admitted, the connexion may be conceived as much between external objects, as between our own thoughts; and, if there be no connexion, but *conjunction only*, the conjunction is not closer between our ideas, than between those changes of external matter which preceded perception. To find in *the knowledge of any past sequence*, even of that of our own thoughts, a prototype

of *the feeling of future invariable sequence* is impossible. There is an assumption to be found in the belief, but not a copy. That, after the customary sequence of two objects, 'the mind upon the appearance of one anticipates the senses, and forms immediately the idea of the other,' is of no consequence. This, if it be any thing more than mere memory, is, at most, only expectation; and the idea, or copy, of this impression, is not power, for that is something more, but is only a fainter expectation, or a remembrance of expectation. In short, Mr. Hume's account of the origin of the idea of power, either proceeds on the belief of the previous idea of power, or supposes it to be a copy of that from which it is completely different. It is enough for us to know, that the belief of similar antecedence and sequence is instinctive;—that our idea of power arises from our belief of that future similarity of events, and is only the feeling of invariable antecedence, attached to a particular object, in reference to another object, as its invariable consequent.

It thus appears, that as the circumstances supposed by Mr. Hume to be peculiar to the phenomena which we term causes and effects, are, on his own principles, common to them, with all the other phenomena of mind, *all* those phenomena, or *none*, should be accompanied with the belief of causation. Unless he have previously taken for granted a distinction of certain objects only, as causes and effects, his attempted explanation must be unintelligible; and, if he have previously taken it for granted, his attempted explanation is useless. The truth is, that every endeavour to explain, what is allowed to be instinctive, is a species of trifling, which may perhaps approach the nature of wit, but which never can be philosophy. A simple statement of the fact is all, which, in such a case, is allowed us; and, though Mr. Hume's laboured 'solution' were as true as it is false, the same difficulty, which his acuteness before pointed out, would follow his reasoning through all its steps. Whether the ideas be faint or vivid, the resemblance of the future to the past, the great and only circumstance which perplexes us, must still be *assumed*, not *inferred* from preceding phenomena. Against the possibility of such a theory as that of Mr. Hume, nature seemed to have sufficiently guarded, by giving us, without any reference to causation, a succession of trains of ideas, of every variety, from the full force of vivid perception, to the faintest shadowings of remembrance. What innumerable images arise every hour in the most unpoetic fancy; and how small a part of life is composed of the actual impressions of external objects! Resemblances, contiguities, and a thousand circumstances, which cannot be included in any formal class of associations, call us perpetually away to the world within. But, while we wander in that world, we are not always philosophizing, and fixing every rising idea, as the effect of a preceding one. The brightness with which they rise, serves only to make our reverie longer, and the illusion more painful, or more delightful. How then has Mr. Hume been able to deceive even himself?—If I may be allowed to speak quaintly, it is, perhaps, the greatness of the error, which has prevented it from being perceived: in other words, the belief of the relation is so completely independent of the circumstances stated by him, that, having already an in-

stinctive, but accurate, conception of causation, he did not feel how inadequate the circumstances in his own statement were to the original production of the belief.

It may be concluded, therefore, that firmness and liveliness of conception ought not to form any part of a theory of the belief of causation. The consideration of events as immediately prior and subsequent, is all which is necessary to the belief, that the priority and subsequence will be in all future cases the same. Such, at least, was probably the original state of the mind; and such it would have continued, had only one event succeeded one event. The mode in which this original tendency to belief is weakened, was stated in the consideration of the fourth proposition of Mr. Hume's theory. It was then shewn, that the effect of experience is different in different stages; that its first tendency is to diminish the belief of future similarity, by presenting to us, in apparent sequence, parts of different co-existing trains of events; that, however, even the doubt which follows is not, whether an event be *an* effect of *a* preceding one, but merely, of what preceding event it is the effect; that, to aid our determination in this respect, is the secondary operation of experience, which informs us in what particular cases we have not been disappointed in our original expectation; and that, with the frequent renewal of this confirmation, our doubt, or suspense, is gradually diminished.

It was in his attention only to the secondary operation of experience, that Mr. Hume's great error consisted. But it is an error which does not affect the truth of the first part of his theory. Rejecting, therefore, the fourth and fifth propositions, we may admit the three which

precede them, and believe, with him, that the relation of cause and effect between any two events cannot be perceived, *a priori*, when the first alone is presented to us; that, even when both have taken place, the relation of future connexion cannot be *inferred by reason*; but that the belief of it, immediate and universal, is the effect of an instinctive principle of our nature.

But, if our belief of power be shewn to depend, not on perception, nor on reason, but on an instinctive feeling, may not this statement give rise to the denial of power, and may not atheism itself, with all its guilt and wretchedness, be made to flow from it? Most unaccountable is it, that this objection should have been made, or at least, that it should have been made at any time by men accustomed to philosophical inquiry, who must therefore have often attended to the nature of that evidence on which all inquiry ultimately rests. Many of Mr. Hume's doctrines are indeed dangerous in the extreme, as destructive of christianity, of belief in a future state, and of every sublime conception of Deity; but it would be difficult to mention any great general theory, either of matter or of mind, from which less practical danger can be supposed to flow, than from the preceding simple theory of causation. The whole supposed danger is included in this proposition, that the belief of the relation of cause and effect is an object of universal belief alone, not of perception, nor of reason. If the instinct be fallacious, it may be said, there is no power; but, if instinct be fallacious, is there power, whatever be our theory? Is not the truth of our perception, the truth of our reasonings, and every physical truth, dependent on the belief of

certain intuitive principles? And is the supposed danger to be confined to Mr. Hume's theory, if it be impossible, even for our imagination, to devise one, to which exactly the same objection is not equally applicable? Let us suppose, that, instead of his sceptical negations, every proposition had been affirmative;—let us first suppose him to have maintained power to be discoverable, *a priori*, in short, to be *perceived* like light and sound; would the truth of this statement, even though we admitted it without objection, be absolute and independent, or rather would it not still be dependent on a principle, involved in the belief, which we attach to perception? Is it an absurd and unintelligible proposition, that what we perceive does not exist, or even that the very opposite of what we perceive may exist? It is a proposition, I own, to which no one assents; but it is a conceivable proposition, and the only reason of our withholding our assent is, that, from a principle of our nature, we find it impossible not to believe, that what we perceive exists as we perceive it. In like manner, it is a conceivable proposition, that, notwithstanding the most frequent and uniform conjunction of two objects, the relation of cause and effect, or of invariable future sequence, may not exist between them; but it is a proposition which, in like manner, we cannot believe, and our reason of disbelief is, that, from a principle of our nature, we find it impossible, in such circumstances, not to believe the relation. Let us next suppose, that Mr. Hume had maintained the relation to be discoverable by a process of reasoning, and that the truth of his theory was admitted by us; could we say of this truth, that it is absolute and

independent?—Of this also, it must be said, that it depends on the truth of an instinctive principle. That the propositions between which we perceive agreement, may yet have no agreement, is not an unintelligible proposition; and why, in any particular instance, do we not assent to it? It is not from the perceived agreement of any other propositions, for that must equally proceed on the assumption: it is only because, by a principle of our nature, we find it impossible not to believe the absolute truth of that which is relative only to our individual powers of comparison. Is this less an instinctive principle, than that by which we are led inevitably to the belief of the relation of cause and effect? Is it alone universal, and the other partial? Or, if there be degrees, have we not rather a more undoubting belief, that an event, which we witness, is an effect of some preceding change, than that the result of any of our reasonings on the appearances of things is absolutely true? It is conceivable, that man might have been created, capable of perceiving, or rather imagining, external qualities, where there were none;—of inferring agreement, where there was none;—of supposing causation, where there was none. He cannot think, that he was so created, in any one of these three cases; but, that he cannot, is, in all the three cases, and in all alike, owing to an instinctive principle, and to it alone. What then shall we say of the danger of negations, which remains exactly the same, when the negations are reversed? If the ultimate evidence be of the same kind, the possibility of mistake is not diminished, but increased, by the number of propositions; and, therefore, Mr. Hume, if

he had asserted the belief of power to arise from a strict and unerring result of reasoning, not from an immediate instinct, would have asserted a theory, the truth of which was certainly not less dependent, and which, if there were any difference, was even more liableto mistake.

It may be remarked also of the demonstrations of reasoning, that, in addition to the general instinctive principle of belief involved in the separate propositions, there is always some primary proposition, of which the truth is as much assumed as that of causation, which serves as the basis of the propositions that follow. The force of the objection is thus *doubled*, when applied to any theory, which derives the belief of power from a process of reasoning.

To assert the instinctive origin of the belief, it appears then, is, if the instinct be real, to fix it on the firmest possible foundation. The only dangerous scepticism would be, to deny the reality of the instinct; and, from the opposition which has been made to the simple analysis in Mr. Hume's theory, it might be supposed, that, not content with denying the possibility of perceiving, *a priori*, or of inferring by reason, the invariable future sequence of any two objects, he had denied also, that such a sequence was an object of our belief. The * universality,

† Nothing can be stronger, and more explicit, than the language of Mr. Hume: ' This belief,' he observes, ' is the necessary result of placing ' the mind in such circumstances. It is an operation of the soul, when ' we are so situated, as unavoidable as to feel the passion of love, when ' we receive benefits; or hatred, when we meet with injuries. All these ' operations are a species of natural instincts, which no reasoning or pro- ' cess of the thought and understanding is able, either to produce, or to ' prevent.' Section V, Part I.

however, of this instinct, and the irresistible influence on our reasoning and conduct, with which it is accompanied, are brought forward by him on every occasion, and are, in truth, the very difficulty which, inconsistently indeed, but industriously, he afterwards labours to solve. On whatever principle the force of experience depend, ' none but a fool or a madman,' he observes, ' will ever pretend to dispute the authority of experience, ' or to reject that great guide of human life.' Of our first principles, indeed, it may be remarked, that even the libertine scepticism, which attacks their very existence, is dangerous, not by destroying the force of those principles, which is impossible, as long as we are men, but only by diminishing, as it were, by a general analogy, in the cases of moral and religious restraint, that awful reverence for them, which arises, not so much from their certainty, as from their never having been questioned. But the scepticism of Mr. Hume on cause and effect;—if the suspicious name of *scepticism* must be given to a question of the justest philosophic analysis,—consists, not in denying any one of our first principles, but in tracing to one of them, as the ultimate source, the force of our various reasonings on cause and effect.

When Bishop Berkeley, not content with hesitating as to the grounds of our belief in an external world, boldly denied its existence, what dangerous consequences might have been supposed to flow from the denial! How absurd did moral virtue immediately become, to man, who was for ever in a state of solitude; and what magnificent arguments for the existence of a Deity were annihilated in the general desolation produced by a few propositions! These desolating propositions are, in the strictness and

accuracy of mere logic, completely unanswerable. No evil consequence indeed can flow from them; but it is only because they are at variance, not with strict *demonstrative* truth, but with that instinctive belief, which, as it is the ultimate source of all conviction, is paramount to demonstration. The instinct, by which we consider the sensations of our mind, as *marks* of the existence of an external world, is too powerful, to be weakened by any theory; and even the celebrated sceptic who opposed it, inconsistently but amiably pious and benevolent, was, at the time of his opposition so completely under its influence, as to deliver his theory professedly for the confutation of those very freethinkers and atheists, whose actual nonexistence his theory implied.

When we address a philosopher, who knows, that it is to an instinctive principle alone our sensations are evidence of things external, we believe, as much as when we address the vulgar, that he will be moved by the reasonings which are founded on the belief of external things; because it is his belief alone, not the source of it, which we address. If that belief be the same, whether it be intuitive, or demonstrative, his emotions and actions will be the same. He will hate, and fear, and despise, and love, alike in either case. In the same manner, if a philosopher believe the relation of cause and effect, every reasoning, founded on that belief, will be the same, whether the belief of the relation be intuitive, or demonstrative. It is only by shewing the insufficiency of the source of belief, that its influence can be diminished; but, if it be founded on an universal and

irresistible instinct, it has the surest foundation, on which demonstration itself can be built.

How many perplexities are involved, in the whole doctrine of infinities! Yet we do not less believe the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, because the most ludicrous absurdities may be logically inferred from it. It may be proved unanswerably, that no space, however small in appearance, can ever be traversed by a moving body, however rapid its motion may be: for, to pass from one point to another, some time, however small, is requisite, and therefore, as the space supposed is infinitely divisible, to pass over an infinite number of parts must require an infinite number of times. Yet, though the conclusion be *logically* irresistible, it is a conclusion, at which we smile only, without admitting it; and we certainly should be astonished at the zeal of any devout mathematician, who should be shocked with the dangerous consequences of the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of matter, because it might be shewn from it, that the children of Israel must have spent a whole eternity, before they could have passed through the Red sea. There are principles of independent feeling, in the human mind, which save it from the follies of its own ratiocinations. By these, we can believe, where there is no argument, and can disbelieve, where there is argument without a single demonstrative imperfection.

In ascribing the belief of cause and effect to an instinctive principle, Mr. Hume has placed it on the same foundation, with our belief of an external world, and even of our own identity. What daring atheist is he, who has ever truly disbelieved the existence of himself

and others? For it is he alone, who can say, *that he is an atheist, because there is no relation of cause and effect.* Mr. Hume's doctrine may, indeed, have been dangerous, to him who does not go to bed that he may sleep, nor rise that he may enjoy another day, nor stretch out his hand to grasp an object, nor eat that he may satisfy his hunger; but it is only to that wonderful individual, as yet unimported to us from any foreign country, that the doctrine can have had any evil consequence: for he, who performs a single action of daily life, in reliance on the similarity of the future to the past, *has already confessed the existence of God, as far as the belief of the existence of God depends on the belief of causation.* If, as Mr. Hume confesses, 'none but a fool or a madman' will deny the authority of that principle, he confesses, that none but a fool or a madman will deny the just reasonings, which are founded on that principle. The theism, which flows from it, will, therefore, be as much believed by him, as the simple proposition, which also flows from it, that fire will warm him to-morrow; or, if he affect to disbelieve the theism, he will state, as the reason of his disbelief, some supposed inconsistency in parts of the ratiocination, not his doubt of that fundamental principle, by which alone, he can expect warmth from the fire of to-morrow. 'Nature,' as Mr. Hume has well observed, 'will always maintain her rights, and prevail, in the end, over any abstract reasoning whatsoever. Though we should conclude, for instance, that, in all reasonings from experience, there is a step taken by the mind, which is not supported by any argument or process of the understanding; there is no danger, that these rea-

sonings, on which almost all knowledge depends, will ever be affected by such a discovery. If the mind be not engaged by argument to make this step, it must be induced by some other principle, of equal weight and authority; and that principle will preserve its influence as long as human nature remains the same.'

When we examine the theories of atheism, which have been given to the world, and which have produced any impression on the weak and unfortunate minds, that have been subject to their influence, we find many, which are founded on narrow views of the universe, on an unwillingness to discover in it marks of creative design and goodness, and even on the very *excess*, if it may be so termed, *of the belief of causation*, which does not content itself, with asserting an invariableness of future sequence that may depend on Deity alone, but supposes the particles of matter to possess principles of operation within themselves, by which the phenomena of the world would be carried on, as at present, though no Deity were in existence. Theories of all these kinds we discover; but we find none which are founded on that general disbelief, that forbids us to expect warmth from fire, and satiety from food. Even he, who professes to discover no traces of the designs of a Creator, is himself a designer every moment; and little reason is there, therefore, to fear the atheistic effects of any doctrine, *which does not prevent us, if the theological argument be well stated, from having as much belief in the existence of God, as we have in our own continued existence, or in the existence of the friend, who is sitting beside us, or in the warmth of fire, and the coldness of snow.*

The suspicion, attached to this doctrine of Mr. Hume, must have arisen from the general character of his writings, not from attention to this single part of them; for, as all are able to catch a general character, and few are able to weigh and appretiate the works from which that character has arisen, there are many, who hate and dread a name, without knowing, for what particular circumstances the name should be dreaded. The just and beautiful analysis, which reduces our expectation of similarity in the future trains of events to intuition, we may therefore safely adopt, without any fear of losing a single argument for the existence of God;—till it be shewn, that physical demonstration itself is not dependent on an instinctive principle, and that, hence, if the belief of power had depended, not on instinct, but on reason, it would have rested on a principle of surer evidence.

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